

RUDIMENTS OF TASTE.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS,

FROM A

MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTERS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF JACOB.

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1789.



P R E F A C E

TO THE

R E A D E R.

CORNELIA, daughter of Scipio Africanus, and mother of the Gracchi, was not more distinguished by the Nobility of her rank, than by the lustre of those virtues which adorned her character—a most pleasing and amiable trait of which shines in that little incident recorded to her
immortal

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immortal honour.—A Lady of Ionia coming one day to visit her, impatiently expected to be shewn the splendour and magnificence of her toilette, which she supposed, from her rank and fortune, to be very superb.—The illustrious Roman prolonged the conversation till her children were at hand, and then introducing them to her visitor:—"These, says she, are my jewels."

The writer of these Letters has so great a veneration for the domestic

P R E F A C E.

mestic character of this Lady, that she thinks she cannot do better than give them to the Public, under the signature of Cornelia.— And whatever their other defects may be, they have this at least to recommend them, that the same sentiments of maternal tenderness which influenced the Roman Matron, gave rise to these epistles, and prompted a fond Mother to become an Author.

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LETTER I.

A DESIRE of happiness is the first propensity of the heart.

—It is born with us, and to attempt its suppression were equally fruitless and wrong; for the Author of Nature has done nothing in vain, and the happiness he has imprinted on the mind so clear an idea of, has somewhere an existence.

B

Hitherto

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Hitherto you have obeyed the impulse of nature in the artless pursuits of childhood; but the time is at hand, when this sweet tranquillity will be interrupted by the bustle of the world, which will not longer permit you to repose in the simple amusements of dressing dolls, pursuing butterflies, or plucking daisies.—Sweet dear delights of innocence; on which, as you climb the rugged heights of life, you will look back with fond regret.

But we are not born for ourselves alone; and therefore have duties to perform, obligations to discharge, and difficulties to encounter; in the course of which, many a severe check is given

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to this happiness which we all so ardently seek: yet the desire of it will even acquire strength by the repulse, and there was never yet a wretch who had found it diminished by misfortune. I wish the success of this passion could be shewn as demonstrable as its existence.

But the truth is, all mankind are running after the same object, though in such opposite directions, that if it were not for their concurrent testimony, it would be scarce credible that they had each the same view. Yet it is the fate of most of them to sit down at last in the very same disposition which Solomon was in when he com-

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plained, rather peevishly it must be owned, that all was vanity and vexation of spirit. — Man walks indeed in a vain shadow, and 'tis pitiable to reflect that a being of so transcient a duration should yet waste the trifling portion of time allotted him in vain and fruitless pursuits, and after all the schemes of the sanguine, and the labours of the active, to find the desired attainment as far off as ever.

But this has been the case of millions, and I am afraid will still continue to be so, at least till we are unanimous in deciding on that grand point wherein this good, of which we have all so high an idea, consists: an agreement
from

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from which, alas, we are at the farthest distance imaginable.—And here my dearest girls, lies the whole of the mistake.—The Creator has not been wanting to provide a happiness exalted as the mind itself can conceive; but man himself errs in the pursuit of it; some placing it in riches, some in power, scarcely one in an age supposing it to be where it really is—in the practice of virtue.

But while the human heart is set on acquirements, in which it can find no satisfaction if attained, the span of life must necessarily be passed in restless anxieties and melancholy disappointment.—It was the aim of philosophy,

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to draw just estimates of things, and to prevent its pupils from being dazzled with the splendor of wealth and power: it taught that the sovereign good was to be found in rectitude of will.—It would be a shame for us to be at a loss on such an important subject, who have received lessons from a much better master than ever gave lectures in the schools of Athens.

Rest assured that in the exercise of social and religious duties, the mind will find her solid happiness.—Wandering in restless search, like Noah's dove, 'tis here she finds at length the welcome olive, the branch whose verdure

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dure blooms for immortality.—Should
you doubt the assertion, be prevailed
on at least to try the experiment.

Yours, &c.

CORNELIA.

B 4

LET.

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LETTER II.

PLEASURE has something so alluring in the very name, that it is not surprizing it finds so great a number of votaries.—On no account would I have you insensible to its attractions, but rather lead you to its flowery paths, and conduct you to the most refined delights.—These however you can never obtain, except you are guided in the choice by taste and judgment.—A taste in pleasure is necessary for the selection of such as are above the enquiries of the vulgar, suitable to delicate and refined minds, and correspondent

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dent to the noblest sentiments; of course dependant more on intellectual, than on corporeal faculties.—Taste never fails to reject whatever is gross and sensual; yet even among the more refined pleasures, a sound judgment is wanted, to discriminate the solid and rational, from the frivolous and fastidious.—The elegant hand of fashionable dissipation has often given a polish to what, in its own nature, can never deserve the name of pleasure.

Under this head must be comprehended the various species of fashionable amusements, which are injurious either to health or fortune.—One would scarcely suppose such pursuits

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as these should ever be dignified with the name of pleasure.—Yet when numbers are daily seen hazarding, not only extravagant sums, but peace of mind also, at the gaming table.—When the order of nature is inverted, and the refreshments of repose bartered for midnight routs, we must conclude that such valuable sacrifices are not made but with the expectation of some supreme pleasure to reward them: how seldom such rewards are found, can best be determined by the testimony of the dissipated and gay, who after they have wasted the most valuable blessings of life, as time, health, spirits, &c. will generally confess that they have

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have never found the satisfactions they fought after.

To be able to divest real enjoyment from the false glosses the world has put upon it, is a piece of wisdom becoming a philosopher; but it is a piece of wisdom, you, my dear girls, must also acquire, if you expect to be happy.—Fashion has arrogated to itself the prerogative of fixing the criterion of pleasure; but fashion is often a dangerous director, and is at best an imperfect one; for who has a power of effectually biasing the natural disposition of another: if therefore what is called amusement be not agreeable to the real turn of the mind, it ceases to be viewed in that light, and can only be considered as

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an irksome conformity to the tastes of others.

Yet, abject as such a submission undoubtedly is, there are thousands who voluntarily yield to it, who are content to live, move, and act, not as they like themselves, but as the polite world thinks fit to dictate.—I am no advocate for affected singularity in things merely indifferent; but when the idol fashion breaks in upon the rules of virtue (as it too often does) or the true enjoyment of life, this is so mean a slavery that a rational being might be expected to despise it.

When therefore reason and religion have given the clue to your pleasures,
resolve

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resolve always to have them of your own chusing, and not of other people's.—The sanction of numbers is the cause that draws youth from virtue and happiness: reason, when aided by a proper education, would, if left to herself, point out the way to both.

There are pleasures, my dear girls, to be met with in this journey of life, pure and sublime ones too, if we look for them through the medium of unviolated taste.—Did you ever discharge a social duty, but upon looking into your heart, you there perceived a glow of satisfaction?—But if you aim at more exalted, more rapturous sensations, give full scope to the impulses
of

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of benevolence: try what it is to heal the broken-hearted; diffuse joy through the mansions of sorrow, and rescue merit from the pressure of indigence and misfortune.—These employments are capable of yielding pleasures suitable to the most exalted capacities, boundless as the most sanguine imagination can paint them.

But if so vast a multitude has erred in the pursuit of pleasure, through levity, not an inconsiderable number, of a very opposite temper, are at equally as great a distance from it: these are the morose and cynical, who will not condescend to the sober satisfactions that are to be found in a domestic

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domestic circle, where the social affections are cultivated: if the gay and volatile mistake the nature of pleasure, these seem to question its very existence, and pass through life without stooping to pick up one of the fair blossoms which nature has scattered in the way.

Ever be your hearts open to the sweet emotions of social love, and you will not have cause to complain that the path of human life affords nothing but briars and thorns.

Nor is it from the relative duties alone we can derive happiness: the amusing, the interesting book of nature

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ture is open to all who can read it: here you meet with eternal variety, order, and beauty; a thousand charms await the mind, which possesses a taste for simple pleasures; to such the whole creation is a boundless source of rational amusement.—Happy, ineffably happy, they who can be pleased with artless nature, and contemplate with delight, the noble imagery with which she abounds.—For my part, I should desire no greater proof of the purity and elegance of your taste, than to hear you speak in raptures of the graceful foliage of a wood, the beauty of a lawn, or any of those charming rural scenes which are so often overlooked

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looked for the far less noble productions of art.

Esteem me ever the most affectionate of your friends,

CORNELIA

J. E. T.

LETTER III.

EVERY one knows that human life is exposed to various miseries; but every one does not know, at least does not consider, that the far greater part of these miseries spring from the passions:—yet the passions, you reply, are implanted in us by nature—we cannot eradicate them.

That is true; you cannot eradicate the passions, nor is it expedient you should; for as we are the workmanship of Infinite Wisdom, so doubtless
the

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the propensities He has formed us with, are in themselves very good: but then their good or ill tendency must be determined by this single question, Whether they govern us, or we govern them?—In the latter case they resemble those salutary breezes, which waft health and sweetness on their wings: in the former they may be compared to certain hurricanes, which tear up all before them, and deform the beautiful aspect of the most luxuriant climates.—There is more felicity to be found in the world than is often supposed; but never let us pretend to look for it before we have silenced the passions; the perpetual of them will else interrupt our successful search.

Pride

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Pride, my dear girls, is a vice that springs up in the mind, almost without her attending to it: its characters are an immoderate self-love, conceitedness, and arrogance, with a profound contempt of every other person; ever insatiable in its desire of respect, extremely susceptible of the slightest affronts, and jealous of the least tribute of applause paid to another.—Persons of this cast cannot in the nature of things be happy, as they may be said to live in a state of hostility with all the world: like Ishmael, they have their hands against every man, and every man's hand is against them.

Ambition condemns its wretched votary to forego the sweets of content
and

and present ease, for the uneasy dreams of rank and power.—It is happy for the world, when fate denies to the ambitious that power to which their desires are perpetually aspiring.—Innumerable are the horrid deeds, which the historic page records, that have been perpetrated by the impulse of this restless passion; yet if in pity to mankind, its direful effects are restrained, still the bosom where it rages, must be a prey to inexpressible agonies.

Envy is a natural attendant on pride and ambition: it has very aptly been compared to a vulture preying on the vitals, and there could not possibly have been devised a more expressive
 similitude

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similitude.—That mind which is capable of regarding with the least degree of regret, the more fortunate acquisitions of another, has a perpetual source of disquietude, and must for ever pine beneath the inexpressible misery, which is both the consequence and the punishment of so base a propensity :—As envy is the meanest of all the passions, so in its own nature it is the most opposite to happiness.

Covetousness is a vice that absorbs every finer feeling of the soul.—Whatever fordid satisfaction the miser may feel in amassing his treasures, yet the cares which unavoidably attend it, and the solicitude the preservation of it demands,

demands, more than balance the selfish gratification.—He knows nothing of the sweet emotions of charity and benevolence, and must be ever a stranger to the noble sensations they excite.—It is well if the suggestions of his boundless avarice do not prompt him beyond the bounds of integrity.—The honesty of a covetous person can be but doubtful at the best.

A revengeful disposition is as dreadful to society as burdensome to itself: it is the whirlwind of the soul, which under its dominion resembles a fury of the infernal regions.—What sad catastrophes have been affected by revenge; what inexpressible torment overwhelms
the

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the heart, where that dreadful venom
reeks.

It is easy to perceive by the slightest glance, that every one of the passions here enumerated are totally destructive of peace: there can be no such thing as tranquillity in the breast which they inhabit: let it then be the care of my dearest girls, to guard against the fatal ascendancy of either of them.—There cannot be a more lamentable object than a human being who submits to become the sport of passions: a bark in a storm driven by winds, and shattered by the tempest, exhibits but a faint picture of such a wretch, whose days pass in continual
anguish;

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anguish—he looks for peace, but finds despair; casts oblique reflections on the wisdom and goodness of providence; distrusts his attributes; curses his own being, and dies if possible more wretched than he lived.

The infinitely wise and good Creator saw the abundant evils that would accrue to mankind from the degeneracy of the passions, and therefore in his goodness determined at an appointed time to promulgate a religion, the aim of which should be to regulate passions, and direct them to their proper channel: such is the christian revelation; in its end and nature an antidote to moral evil.

C

Perhaps

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Perhaps the natural passions of the human mind may be reduced to two—The love of pleasure and the love of praise, and from the corruptions of these may be traced every irregular affection of the heart—when men no longer knew the true source from whence to look for happiness, or approbation, it is not much wonder it should be sought in power, riches, and pre-eminence; nor that the love of these should branch into self-love, vain glory, and all the other evil passions, which cause so much misery in the world.

The regulation of the heart and its desires, is a point then of the utmost
import-

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importance, since on it depends your present peace and eternal glory. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."—And when you have repelled the approach of any passion, guard still more effectually against its entrance, by endeavouring to establish in your mind the contrary virtue;—as for instance, subdue pride and cherish humility; guard against the desire of power and riches, by attaining that poverty of spirit which is content with little, and desires no applause but that of Heaven.

Never lose sight of this truth—that there is no happiness adequate to the capacities of the human soul,

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but what is found in the exercise of
piety and virtue ; nor any praise wor-
thy her regard, but what results im-
mediately therefrom.

Adieu,

CORNELIA.

L E T.

LETTER IV.

THE most glorious conquests you can possibly obtain is that of yourselves.—Solomon was of opinion, that he who could govern his own spirit, had attained a much higher point of dominion, than if he should rule a kingdom. It is certainly much easier to give wise and upright laws to others, than to obey them ourselves; and when you can controul your own inclination, you will have learned the whole essence of moral philosophy.

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But a negative virtue is not all that is to be attained, although thousands content with it, maintain through life the character of good sort of people. The epithet, however, contains no very high eulogium. Those good kind of folks seldom getting above a mediocrity in goodness. It certainly is not sufficient to abstain from evil, a christian must be distinguished by active virtue.

The christian religion is a beautiful comment on the moral law. The Priest who passed by the wounded Jew, was for ought we are told to the contrary, a very good sort of man, and had some sentiments of compassion, for he went and *looked*
on

on the poor creature, and no doubt kindly *wished* it had been in his power to relieve him; but the good, the benevolent Samaritan, was the generous, *active* friend, whose character will never be read without being admired. The Lawyer also possessed a tolerable share of negative merit, having always kept the commandments; yet says our Saviour, thou lackest one thing—that heroic benevolence, which disregards all attention to selfish gratification, in the noble ardour with which it contributes to the necessities of mankind.

These instances are fine illustrations of the Mosaic dispensation, and eminently tend to exalt human nature to

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the highest possible perfection. It is not enough, say the gospel tenets, that ye refrain from actual violence to any one—you shall love your enemies, and do good to those that hate you.—Severe injunction!—yet you see by it to how refined a pitch the virtue of a christian must aspire.

Do not then rest satisfied with being as just or kind as the letter of the law exacts—be actively good, and seek occasions of exercising your kindness and charity—to administer as far as we are able to the wants of our fellow creatures—to reclaim the vicious—to vindicate the character of the injured—to assert the claims of the friendless and oppressed—

pressed—reconcile differences, and be indefatigable in the promotion of peace and happiness to all within the compass of your ability, are employments worthy of a rational being.

There are many cases that occur in life, wherein those who will obey only the rules of legal justice, must fall short of those notions of honesty, which natural reason and conscience suggests; as a good mind wants not the bonds of human laws, so on some occasions it rises to a generosity that is superior to their narrow limits. Obey the innate ideas of rectitude which God himself has stamped on the human soul—and think it not suf-

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ficient to be just, except you are generous also.

Let your conduct be regulated by the nicest rules of propriety and prudence; and let your bosoms glow with the enthusiasm of virtue, that you may ever shine forth the steady zealous friend, the benevolent active neighbour, and the truly useful member of society; considering yourselves as citizens of the world, whose only business in it is to do good.

Adieu,

CORNELIA.

LET-

LETTER V.

BUT so exalted and refined a turn of sentiment is never the production of ignorance. It is only in cultivated minds we must look for it; for the prime fruits of virtue grow not in the soil that has never been broken up by moral instruction.—A virtuous and intelligent friend is perhaps the most valuable acquisition a young person can make; but as one of this description may never fall to your lot, supply the want thereof, as well as you can, by books.

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By all means cultivate a taste for reading, but take care that your taste be a just one—that is, be more desirous of instruction than amusement, or you will profit but little by literary pursuits.—Those who read merely to please the imagination, may be sure of not reading to advantage, and do seldom acquire a relish for works of solid merit and utility.—I have never known a young person who was fond of novels capable of relishing any thing superior to them.—For my own part, I had rather see a girl wholly ignorant of the alphabet, than attached to that species of writing; for I am convinced that infinitely more have erred in the conduct of life from that cause, than
from

from any other.—The sentiments and ideas they impress, are fatal illusions to mislead the poor reader, who, after wasting days and years in the study, is still an utter stranger to the world she lives in—and, what is worse, inspired with the most erroneous notions of it, which commonly lead to some false step, or ill-judged connection, that secures her a wretch for life. It cannot be otherwise—for the scenes, characters, and incidents, these books describe, are to be found no where but in the author's romantic fancy.—They have nothing to do with the real knowledge of the world; and, consequently, those who think to steer through it by such guides, must, in
the

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the end, find themselves mistaken.—
Just as well may a traveller think to
make the tour of Europe by a chart
of Asia.

If curiosity must be amused, and the
imagination pleased, why may not the
understanding be improved at the same
time?—This is very practicable, for
there are many works of genius ex-
tremely well calculated to answer each
of these ends; but they are not the
histories of Sir such a one, Miss what
de call um, or any of those futile
productions, which the press daily
emits, to vitiate the taste, and corrupt
the principles of the age.

There

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There is a certain mental vigour necessary to virtue as well as to happiness, but modern novels, under the specious mask of refined sentiments, introduce a dangerous softness that has often destroyed both. True refinement is the glory of a rational creature, but whatever enervates the mind, must debase it. Lycurgus thought so, I suppose, when he banished the poets from his commonwealth; yet surely he lived near enough to Athens to have learned to draw a proper line between ferocity and effeminacy.

The passion for novelty, so inherent in youth, may be abundantly gratified

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gratified, by the study of history.—

[Here you meet with new and uncommon events—become acquainted with a variety of characters, and are enabled to form a just estimate of mankind; for, except allowing for a few local customs or prejudices, human nature was the same two thousand years ago as at this time.—There is something extremely agreeable to the mind in weighing and examining the actions of celebrated personages, who, in their day, made the mighty tremble—in marking the rise or fall of empires, and to be able to determine the secret causes of those revolutions which once astonished the world.

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The ages appear as inconsiderable points, to those who are acquainted with history—they see the various nations of the earth pass in review before them, and trace a more than human power busy in the affairs of men—by taking in at one comprehensive view so vast a tract of time, they discern the nice connections of that scheme of Providence, which often appears broken and irregular, when contemplated only through the medium of a few years.

It is almost impossible to be well versed in the characters of the politer nations of antiquity, without catching something of that magnanimity
which

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which distinguished them; and I know not why an acquaintance with their manners should not be thought as necessary in the system of female education, as it usually is in that of the other sex.—If the Greek and Roman veterans displayed qualities which the heroes of the present day would be proud to imitate, their wives and daughters were often patterns of such virtues, as would be allowed to dignify a lady of the eighteenth century.

Read modern history as well as ancient—the knowledge of the nations who inhabit the globe as well as yourselves, is amusing and interesting—the heart, too, may be the better for it—

narrow

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narrow prejudices are removed, and the better mankind become acquainted with each other, the more the divine principle of philanthropy must be extended.—National enmity has no other parent but ignorance—the enlightened, the philosophic mind, even through the veil of different tongues and customs, can discern a kindred being—a member of that universal family, whose head is the Deity.

Next to travelling itself, nothing tends more to enlarge the ideas than journals of travels and voyages, if the writers have been faithful and accurate; and you will read them with infinite pleasure, if you have been
careful

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careful to acquire a knowledge of geography.—This renders you familiar with the countries you read of—You recollect their soil, climate, and productions—know their respective boundaries, and can readily mark out their place on the globe.

Having thus, my dear girls, pointed out to you so exhaustless a source of amusement, I will only for the present add, that I am, &c.

CORNELIA.

LETTER VI.

AS long as curiosity continues a leading feature in the human character, Biography will form a favourite species of reading. Every body is eager to pry into the private character of a celebrated personage, and are better pleased to know, how such an one acts in domestic life, than in the senate, or the field. And, indeed, it is there that the best estimate of the real description can be formed.

The private lives of famous persons afford much edification to the reader;
the

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the vice or meanness too often there displayed, teaches us not to be dazzled by the blaze of popularity or power; and to contemn that virtue which is built on the desire of fame alone. If on the other hand, by following these darlings of fame to the closet, or the fire-side, we discover the same nobleness of heart that distinguishes them with the multitude, justly they become patterns for our example; the mind rejoices to find something about them that is *imitable*, for though few are called forth as distinguished actors on the theatre of the world, all may, if they please, be *great* in private life: That is, may acquire those amiable qualities of mind, which can only constitute

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stitute real greatness; without which the hero is no more than a hypocrite, and even the robe of royalty, but a tinsel ornament to cover real meanness.

Your chief aim should be the knowledge of the human heart, and that is in general more fully discovered in trifling traits and circumstances, than by important actions performed under the public eye. But you no where find human nature so impartially delineated, as in the sacred writings. There the historians, neither influenced by passion or prejudice, relate both actions and their secret springs with unerring candour; never calumniating

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niating enemies, or stooping to flatter the favourites of their nation.

The Jewish writers had the fairest opportunities imaginable for exaggerating the virtues of their heroes, considering the miraculous powers so often exerted in their behalf. Such an adventure as that of David with Goliath, would have been thought by a pagan writer, sufficient grounds for exalting his favourite to a God; yet the inspired Biographer has drawn that Prince with all his frailties about him; all the inequality of humanity; sometimes glowing with the rapturous devotion of a Seraphim;—at other, enslaved by the meanest passions. Such instances

instances of candour considered with the national pride of the Jews, leave no room to doubt the veracity of the sacred penman on any occasion.

The scriptures also finely illustrate many parts of profane history: we are told of embattled armies, and cities levelled with the dust; but it is only in holy writ we find those armies prophetically marshalled, and that destruction denounced perhaps an hundred-years before the event. These are instances which impress the mind with reverence for the sacred records, and fill it with august ideas of the eternal Providence.

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The

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The works of our best moralists will not be unentertaining to you, if your taste for reading be as good as I wish it. Amongst the productions of this kind are the Spectator and the Rambler; as conspicuous for the elegance of their language, as the soundness of their morality. But there are no better rules for the moral conduct of life, than are found in the writings of Solomon, and the Son of Sirach; which, though composed so many ages ago, may yet be read to much advantage, by those who would pass through life happily and respected.

If you are fond of poetry, be careful to read only what is good of it.

I

There

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There is a kind of versification that tends to debase the mind ;—wherever immorality or indelicacy is found, such must ever be the effect. Elegance of numbers, though a requisite, is yet the lowest recommendation of good poetry ;—its characteristics are dignity of thought, purity of expression, and, above all, the best principles of piety and morality. For this reason, those poetical pieces extant in the Bible are by good judges allowed to be truly sublime. Poetry in its original state, being only the harmonious effusions of a mind glowing with elevated sentiments of generosity, gratitude and devotion. Many of the Psalms are noble compositions, and

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neither for beauty of figure, or energy of expression, have ever been excelled.

Natural history affords a delightful study—it is not however expected that you should have a systematic idea of every vegetable, animal, or insect; but it is unpardonable, for one who is blest with leisure and opportunity, not to have at least a general knowledge of the most conspicuous of Nature's works;—to be ignorant of the beauty and properties of those, is to wander over the fair creation, as Thomson expresses it, “with brute unconscious gaze.”—The curious and intelligent spectator finds the variegated
face

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face of nature, a source of rational amusement, and reads in glowing characters the wisdom of the Deity.—It is not in such pursuits that the human mind acquires those illiberal sentiments which so often disgrace it;—all it here finds is noble and beneficent, worthy that Divine Author, whom to know and adore, is the proper glory of an intelligent being.

Akenfide has so elegantly expressed the pleasures attending a taste for the study and beauties of nature, that I will relieve you from the tediousness of this epistle, by transcribing a few of his admired lines.

O! blest of Heaven, whom not the languid
songs

Of luxury, the syren! not the bribes

D 3

Of

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Of fordid wealth, nor all the gaudy spoils
Of pageant honour, can seduce to leave
Those ever blooming sweets, which from the
 store

Of Nature, fair Imagination culls
To charm th' enliven'd soul! What, tho'
 not all

Of mortal offspring can attain the height
Of envied life; tho' only few possess
Patrician treasures, or imperial state;
Yet Nature's care, to all her children just,
Endows at large whatever happy man
Will deign to use them.

————— For him the spring
Distills her dews, and from the silken gem
Its lucid leaves unfolds; for him the hand
Of Autumn tinges every fertile branch
With blooming gold, and blushes like the
 morn.

Each passing hour sheds tribute from her
 wings;

And

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And still new beauties meet his lonely walk,
And loves unfelt attract him.—Not a breeze
Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes
The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake
Fresh pleasure unprov'd :—nor then partakes
Fresh pleasure only ; for the attentive mind,
By this harmonious action on her pow'rs,
Becomes herself harmonious ; wont so oft
In outward things to meditate the charm
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home
To find a kindred order, to exert
Within herself this elegance of love,
This fair inspired delight ; her temper'd
pow'rs
Refine at length, and ev'ry passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mein.

———— Thus the men
Whom nature's works can charm, with God
himself
Hold converse ; grow familiar day by day

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With his conceptions ; act on his plan ;
And form to his the relish of their souls.

Believe, dear girls, that I am ever
the most affectionate of your friends.

CORNELIA.

LET.

LETTER VII.

AMONGST the accomplishments necessary to the female character, I think needle-work may claim the first place, it having so close a connection with neatness, which is indisputably requisite to render you comfortable to yourselves, or amiable in the esteem of others.—The ladies of the last century certainly held needle-work in much greater estimation than those of the present ; witness the many laborious performances that yet remain as proofs of their amazing in-

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dustry in this respect—but the world is ever prone to extremes, and because this art was then pursued to the exclusion of every intellectual accomplishment, there are many in our days who seem to think it beneath their study or ambition.

The Mahometan sentiment which prevailed some years ago, of the inferiority of the female mind, seems exploded in this age of universal refinement; and a woman of cultivated understanding is no longer a phænomenon.—The paths of knowledge are rendered accessible—men of learning have stooped from the elevations of science to accelerate the improvements
of

of the other sex—they abridge, compile, explain for their assistance and advancement in polite literature.

Make all the use you possibly can of such advantages, and be convinced that the cultivation of the mind will exalt you in the estimation of rational beings—will open to you exhaustless sources of amusement and delight, of which the ignorant can have no conception—yet be careful, my dear girls, never to overlook one feminine grace or accomplishment.—There is a line of character drawn between the sexes, which neither can pass without becoming contemptible.—It is not to make you despise those acquirements

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which have ever been appropriated to the female sex, that you are incited to mental attainments, but to render you still more valuable as women; and the better your minds are cultivated, the more you will see the propriety of attending to those minutiae which become the condition in which Providence has placed you.

I do not see how you can acquit yourself tolerably in domestic life, without a knowledge of needle-work; but granting your rank and fortune may place you above the absolute necessity of learning that part of it which is called plain-work—yet consider how far the ornamental kinds may

may be of use to amuse the intervals of pleasures, or other pursuits, as well as to promote the display of an elegant taste. Even our innocent amusements require variation, and the mind may be agreeably relieved, by imitating with the needle the beautiful productions of nature—but there is something which places a skill in needlework in a much more important point of view, and that is, the inconstancy of fortune, which in her capricious moods has been often known to compel those, whom once she smiled on, to procure their subsistence by those very arts which were acquired only for amusement.—Whatever may be a resource against that mutability which

marks

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marks all human affairs, becomes an object of importance.

A proficiency in the arts of domestic management and œconomy, ought justly to be ranked among the accomplishments of a young lady. You must be unacquainted with nothing that appertains to good housewifery. —Some girls have I known profess so violent an attachment to literary pursuits, that they are content to remain ignorant of common attainments.—This shews a pitiable weakness—elevated minds were attentive to every thing; and, believe me, it is very possible to possess a competent knowledge of polite literature, and be well

well versed in the methods of well governing a house at the same time—the latter qualifications have of themselves constituted many an useful character in female life, which is more than can be said of the former. Blend therefore, my beloved girls, *polite* with *useful* acquirements, and you will be what I wish you.

In writing, acquire, if possible, a good hand, yet that is not so essentially necessary as the being able to write grammatically—the violation of the *common* rules of grammar is an indisputable mark of low breeding—and although my Lord Chesterfield sarcastically said that bad spelling was
only

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only allowable in a woman, it certainly is not in any one, who pretends to an education above the vulgar.— Could you write as fine a hand as even A——n himself, bad spelling would disgrace the whole.—The substituting *have* for *has*, *are* for *is*, &c. infallibly sinks you in the estimation of well bred persons. In order to avoid errors of this kind, habit is to be particularly guarded against.—If in your early years you are not careful to write and spell correctly, it is a thousand to one if you ever do.— You see, therefore, of what consequence it is that you pay a present attention to these points.

I reckon

I reckon among the useful attainments, the ability of penning an epistle with propriety and elegance—many fortunate circumstances in life may be facilitated thereby—a well wrote letter has often effected what verbal requests have sought in vain—besides this consideration, how greatly must the sweet intercourse of friendship be improved by a free and intelligent correspondence.—Two friends, though placed at the extremities of the globe, may thus enjoy all the pleasures of such a connection—but except you attain the desirable habit of expressing your sentiments without embarrassment, hope not to enjoy any thing of so delicate
a satis-

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a satisfaction.—Letters should be the pictures of the soul; and so they always would be, if people acquired only the knack of expressing their thoughts just as they arise.—Write as you would speak, were the persons you address immediately before you. There is no more than this necessary to establish that easiness of style which is the chief beauty of epistolary correspondence. That good breeding which I hope will be habitual to you, will dictate those terms and forms of address, the condition of those you write to requires.—We do not always find the most learned people write the most agreeable letters—perhaps for
no

no other reason than that they take too much trouble about it, and, like the good Archbishop of Benevento, reject the first thought that occurs.—Some that I have known indite an epistle in such a stiff and formal style, and load it so disgustfully with tautology, that one would almost take it for an Act of Parliament.—When you write a letter, my dear girls, forget the idea of pen, ink, and paper—suppose only you are speaking to the person, and you will write an *agreeable*, if not a *fine* letter—to effect the latter, something must have been done by dame Nature—however, this I know—that the most elevated sentiments would not
look

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look graceful in such compositions, except accompanied by perfect ease and expression, and have the appearance of flowing spontaneously from the heart.—Many excellent models of epistolary writing have been recommended to young proficients.—You cannot have better than those ascribed to Pope Ganganelli;—whoever was the Author, he has certainly hit on that ease, sprightliness, and elegance, which it is my earnest wish may characterise whatever falls from your pen.—Would to Heaven that all the world possessed the same candour and liberality of sentiment, which
breathes

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breathes through every one of those
elegant epistles.

Adieu,

CORNELIA.

L E T.

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L E T T E R VIII.

WHEN you compare the aukward motions of a rustic, with the genteel and graceful movement of a person of education, you cannot but be assured of the utility of dancing, but it should never be forgotten, that to give this superiority of mien and air is the chief end of that polite accomplishment ;—to lose sight of this idea is to take away the real worth of that branch of genteel education ;—to reduce it to an unimportant, if not pernicious attainment. However a know-

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knowledge of dancing may sometimes conduce to social pleasure, and in that light be esteemed an agreeable and innocent recreation, I cannot help thinking, that the same application that is requisite to form an opera dancer, may very well be dispensed with in a young lady of a different character. The extravagant leaps and gestures of some fashionable females, make me think of the speech of Philip of Macedon to his son, on another occasion—I am ready to ask if they “are not ashamed to *dance* so well.”

There is scarce a human soul, however apparently dead to sensibility, but is in some measure alive to the extatic

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tic charms of music. The story of Orpheus, is more than a fable—minds almost as inert and inanimate as trees themselves, have been moved by the power of harmonious sounds ;—why else does the gaping rustic follow with such manifest delight the itinerant musician ; and why, but that the effect of music on the passions, is so incontestibly proved, has the army adopted the sons of Apollo with those of Mars. Since then this science has so great an influence on the feelings of the soul, is it not surprizing that the polite world should not be more ambitious of enjoying those sublime sensations, which the best pieces are so abundantly capable of exciting, and
not

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not rest poorly satisfied with the lukewarm pleasures of sing-song, while the noble compositions of great masters, lie by totally disregarded.—Indulge, my dear girls, a turn for music, if nature has given you such; but do not permit a song tune, or an opera air to be the limits of your excellence in that enchanting science.

Drawing, painting, &c. justly form a part of polite education, because they furnish an agreeable, as well as rational amusement. They lead to a familiarity with the beauties of nature, and that can scarcely fail to advance the mind a degree higher, even to the contemplation of her Di-

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vine Author.—But if it had not this happy tendency, drawing is still a laudable amusement, because an innocent one ; and whatever furnishes a recreation of that character, may certainly be deemed an auxiliary to virtue.

An acquaintance with the languages of polite nations, greatly enlarges the mind. It is the property of ignorance to esteem nothing valuable that a foreign country produces ; and scarcely to allow that its inhabitants are human. Nothing tends more immediately to remove such illiberal prejudices, than studying the language of the people thus despised. The supercilious contemner is surpris'd to find them

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them rational, and expressing similar ideas with those of his own country.

If necessity or inclination ever leads you from your native land, a previous acquaintance with the language of those you reside among, would much facilitate your pleasure and convenience ; would open to you the avenues of social love and friendship, and take off much from those comfortless sensations the mind is apt to feel in the idea of being amongst a people it knows not. For this end, perhaps it may be sufficient to acquire the knowledge of the French tongue, that being generally understood by intelligent persons of every European nation.

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But there is another advantage attending this branch of polite accomplishment, and which probably to you, my dear girls, will be the most useful—I mean the being able to read in their original, those beautiful compositions which lose many of their excellencies by translation; for this reason become acquainted also with the Italian; but Homer and Virgil you tell me have beauties that can never be translated—true; yet these I fancy you must be content to taste as pure as the labours of the learned afford them. The Greek and Latin tongues, forming no part in the polite system of female education at present, nor certainly ever can in the *useful*.

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Arithmetic is a dry study, yet certainly a very useful one, to those who would manage their affairs with cecconomy and prudence;—a thorough knowledge of the four first rules, is sufficient to enable you to do it.

From a total ignorance of letters in female life, we are advanced to an age which requires every girl to be made a grammarian; yet it unfortunately happens, that of the numbers who profess to have studied the grammar of their native tongue, few speak or write it with that accuracy which could be wished; indeed the progress that women usually make in that science, is seldom of itself sufficient to give an

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habitual elegance of expression; they are more indebted for it to frequent reading of the best authors, and the conversation of those who have themselves acquired it perfect; what you can, acquire of grammar by such assistances as these. There is an indispensable necessity for you to write and speak English correctly, acquire that qualification as easily as you can, but nothing will more facilitate it, than the methods I have mentioned.

Geography is a study that will please you an hundred times better,—this is not like the former, a set of dry rules, but almost every advance you make therein, will abundantly repay your pains

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pains by the novelty of the information it produces. Besides, I cannot imagine, how the frequent relations that occur in common discourse will be intelligible, without some acquaintance with this study. I am sure if you are no geographer, even a newspaper will be as inexplicable as an Egyptian hieroglyphic. Attain a competent knowledge of the globe on which you live, that your apprehension of infinite wisdom may be enlarged; which, it will be in a much higher degree if you take care to acquire a general idea of the structure of the universe. It is not expected you should become adepts in astronomy, but a knowledge of its leading principles,

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you may, and ought to obtain. The French, with their usual attention to the sex, has procured them a gentleman usher, if I may so speak, to the planetary orbs—Fontenelle introduces them to an acquaintance with that brilliant assembly—it is not the first instance, in which our agreeable neighbours have blended the researches of the scholar, with the politeness of a fine gentleman.

Avail yourselves of such ingenious Assistances, and be all your Cornelia wishes.

L E T.

LETTER IX.

AN accomplished character, has so many charms, that nothing needs be said to induce you to *wish*, at least, for its attainment.—Yet painful application must render that wish effectual—a reflection however that should excite your emulation, rather than despondency—trivial acquirements may content the indolent and timid, but the arduous and difficult are the proper aim of elevated minds. Courage belongs not to the

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warrior alone,—it is as often found in the closet, as the field.

That resolution which is necessary for every valuable purpose of life, is the fruit only of active minds, and was never found with indolence and sloth;—determine therefore to conquer every tendency to an inactive temper. Whenever you feel in yourselves an inaptitude for doing what necessarily ought to be done, rouse that moment, or you will give ground to an enemy the most destructive to happiness and virtue; and who once entrenched is hard to be dislodged. Never defer to the next hour, that which should be the business of the present.

“ What-

“Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it, with all thy might,” said a very wise man many hundred years ago; indeed there is no precept throughout the sacred writings, inculcated with greater energy than this of diligence.—It is the soul of virtue—the foundation of honour and affluence.

Many a bright and shining talent lies hid in a napkin, for want of activity to unfold it; nor do we unfrequently meet with persons struggling with distresses, which require only their own exertions to remove. Indolence takes hold of the disposition much oftner than is acknowledged; it is possible to be wholly under its domi-

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nion, and yet suspect nothing of it;—
and, what is yet more strange, to believe one's self to be the most diligent person in the world at the very time. You have seen numbers of bustling people, who are always in a hurry, and so perplexed do they appear with business, as never to be able to enjoy a friend or themselves. It would seem, hard at first sight, to accuse them of indolence, and yet they are of all people most commonly under its power; for an habitual diligence would so comfortably arrange the affairs of life, that none would be found to intrude on another.—Consider the surprising dispatch with which some in public stations, manage a multiplicity of
the

the most important concerns;—to contemplate them, one would almost conclude, nothing too extensive for the compass of the human mind;—diligence is the charm which effects it all.

In that dismal catalogue of diseases which imbitter mortality, not a few owe their existence to indolence.—The indigent labourer who toils for daily bread, knows nothing of that sad train of nervous disorders which render life itself burdensome to the wealthy. In some cases, poverty might justly be called a blessing. Great are the achievements which resolution and diligence can effect;—in nothing is their power more conspicuously seen, than

than in the cultivation of the mind; to reflect on the progress of the human understanding—to compare the refinements of philosophy with a state of savage nature—a Newton, with an inhabitant of New Holland, we should almost conclude some supernatural power must have contributed to give the former so infinite a superiority in the scale of beings.—Without the quality I have recommended it could never have been attained, for though much be owing to accidental advantages, such as the being born in an enlightened kingdom afford, yet no inconsiderable portion of diligence is required to render these advantages personally effectual

effectual.—It is this, my dear girls, that makes them yours, and without it, the soul will remain as uninformed as if destined to a land where science never darts a cheering beam.

It may seem strange to tell you of old age, before you have scarce passed your infancy ; yet I must not conceal from you, that a period will arrive, when exterior attractions will be no more ;—when mental acquirements will prove your highest lustre and sublimest comfort. However despicable an ignorant woman appears at any part of her life, in the decline of it she is sure to become far more contempt-

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contemptible ; at that time it is the improvements she has made in early days, that give dignity of character. An old age of cards necessarily succeeds a youth of folly.—Pope could not have said any thing more descriptive of the insignificancy of those ancient babies, than he has expressed in that concise satire. If you would avoid the contempt which never fails to attend a frivolous old age, you must pass a youth of diligence and application.

But then the pleasures resulting from it surpasses description, the satisfactions of a rich cultivated mind are only fully known

known to the happy possessor; one of them, we are assured, is a noble independence, which creates, if I may so speak, its own happiness; is not indebted to dissipation, or the caprice of others; but can derive from itself exhaustless resources for solitude or society. Ordinary persons are obliged to fly from Ennui to the regions of amusement, but superior beings, who have traversed the fields of useful and polite knowledge, can from themselves select materials for the most exquisite enjoyment.

Do you think this an acquisition worth desiring—then never forget that it can be obtained only by diligence

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and active industry.—Habits of indolence are destructive of every valuable attainment, and they are as much so of happiness, as they are known to be of virtue.

Adieu,

CORNELIA.

L E T.

LETTER X.

CULTIVATED minds have pleasures which surpass the vulgar apprehension.—They have their pains as well—for there is an evil peculiar to refined feeling, which the untaught rustic is happily ignorant of.—This happens when refinement, or at least the affectation of it, is carried to such an extreme, that it degenerates into false delicacy.—The symptoms of the malady are a kind of secret dissatisfaction with every thing—the common blessings of life are despised, as inadequate to the refinement of their ideas

ideas, and every petty slight augmented by such a quickness of perception, as leads them to see affronts, when none perhaps have been intended.—And this peevish irritable temper they are pleased to dignify with the name of sensibility, and pique themselves on a disposition that disqualifies them for social virtue, or social happiness.—What pity that a quality meant to heighten every real blessing, should be ascribed to the mere chimera of a sickly brain.—Never may you, my dears, by indulging these fictitious feelings, refine away the felicity which a kind Providence scatters in your path of life.—Nourish in your bosoms • humility and good-nature—these will teach you to
make

make the best of your lot, whatever it be, and give a relish to every enjoyment—all is serene where they reside. Humility, by arrogating nothing to herself, remains unhurt at the supercilious scorn of ignorance or pride; and good-nature, by casting a veil over the foibles of others, presents to our view the best side of this motley scene.

Without doubt, superior minds have a quicker sense of what is beautiful in nature, or desirable in life, than a peasant, whose ideas extend not beyond his daily occupations—perhaps they feel also more acutely the evils of their condition; yet the persons
who

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who suffer most by this affected sensibility are not they who have the greatest share of afflictive events, but the idly speculative, who being employed to no good purpose, have time to nourish those artificial feelings which Nature knows nothing of.

Sensibility! — What is it?—Is it not that delicate perception of natural and moral beauty, which the Creator has implanted in the soul to exalt its happiness, and awaken its noblest passions?—How greatly, then, do they err who substitute in the room of this best gift of Heaven, that which

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is the very weakness of humanity,
pride and peevishness.

It is paying a very poor compliment to literary pursuits, to suppose they are productive of that softness which unfits the mind for enduring the common accidents of life.—And those attainments are of little value that serve no better purpose than to barb the arrows of misfortune with stings which the unenlightened never feel.—But probably they who dream of such effects are the superficial, who never dived beyond the surface of literature, and whose feeble intellects are unable to digest even the little they have imbibed.

If

If you have really made any advancement in mental improvement, it will invigorate the powers of the soul, and inspire her with that magnanimity which is certainly necessary to the happiness of a being, who is every moment exposed to sorrow and disappointment.——Value not yourselves on any refinements that are short of this effect.

Some, I know, are even restrained from the exercise of benevolence by this affectation of sensibility—their feelings are too tender to bear with scenes of distress, and too refined for the duties of social life; they therefore keep at an unfriendly distance
from

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from society, but the ignorance or rudeness they there may meet with, should wound their excessive delicacy—but how is this obeying the injunction of the Apostle, who exhorts us to be kindly affectioned one to another—bearing with each others infirmities?

In fine, my dear girls, come to the feast of social life, accompanied by the virtues of humility and charity, and you will not arise dissatisfied from the entertainment.

Your's,

CORNELIA.

F

LET.

LETTER XI.

I HAVE often thought that the great prevalence of vice arises chiefly from a culpable weakness of temper—for there is nothing so amiable in it that it should be followed for its own sake.—It is the mere want of resolution that betrays such numbers into the dreadful abyss of sin and misery.

“ The world’s dread laugh

“ Scarce e’en the firm Philosopher can bear.”

But, in my opinion, he must be a poor Philosopher who cannot, and would

would have made but a sorry figure in the Portico or Lyceum.

It is not meant to inculcate to you a boisterous, imperious carriage.—May my girls possess every feminine grace and virtue, but these cannot be supported without some portion of resolution.—There is a proper firmness, without which neither virtue, happiness, or dignity of character, can be long maintained.—Distrust those who extol the soft irresolution of the sex—it is the very rock on which thousands of deluded females have been lost.

Be possessed of the true principles of honour and rectitude, and dare to

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adhere to them in spite of sollicitation, or that still more powerful means of temptation, ridicule.—Establish your opinions on truth and reason, and maintain them, when necessary, with firmness;—some people give up both their faith and their friends, for want of resolution to defend them.

Too weak to think, too indolent to chuse.

In business, and the affairs of life, a proper firmness is indispensibly necessary.—Those who can be influenced by every adviser, or intimidated at every appearance of difficulty, must of course be desultory and unsettled.—They effect nothing of consequence, because they know not how to persevere

severe in any undertaking.—Obstacles will attend the best concerted schemes, and mankind will ever think differently about them; but the truly wise will await with steady patience the issue of those measures they have been careful to found in prudence and the moral fitness of things.—Some will undertake nothing, till they see the path smooth before them, and attain almost a certainty of success. Such will find their lives wasted, before they have determined on the plan of it.—Those who best know the state of humanity, will be convinced, that to design prudently and act firmly, is all that can be done by mortals.

Without resolution, it will sometimes be impossible to act agreeably to the dictates of right reason, and virtue, for these are not always the *ton*—and when that is the case, no inconsiderable share of fortitude is requisite to repel the attacks of ridicule or allurements—nor can the treasures of knowledge be explored, without a portion of it—for “there is nothing truly valuable to be attained without pains and labour.”—Dismayed at the prospect, the indolent, as described by Solomon, cry, “a lion is in the street”—rather may my dear girls be animated with a noble ardour, to surmount every difficulty which would retard their acquisition of merit and felicity.—

felicity.—Parnassus itself was a craggy rock, but then the Muses dwelt on its top.

But if resolution be necessary to the attaining whatever is valuable or desirable in life, it is no less so to the supporting us under a deprivation of it.—The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong—hence it follows, that the wisest measures do not always meet with success, nor can virtue itself prevent the encroachments of affliction—in such circumstances fortitude gives a dignity to suffering, and tends also to alleviate the weight of it.—Every one knows the sentiment of the Philosopher—

F 4

“ that

“ that a good man struggling with
 “ adversity, is a sight on which
 “ the Gods themselves might look
 “ down with delight.”—However that
 be, it is certain that such a character
 never fails to command the respect and
 veneration of mankind.—Magnani-
 mity, of all the qualities of the mind,
 seems most secure of admiration.—
 The Saviour of the world inculcated
 it, when having forewarned his disci-
 ples of their approaching sufferings he
 enjoined them to possess their souls in
 patience.—Patience is amongst the
 Christian duties, what magnanimity is
 in the list of heroic virtues.—They are
 synonymous terms—both imply that
 calm, unshaken fortitude, which is at
 once

once characteristic of the hero and the Christian.

But do not conclude this firmness of mind—this laudable resolution is calculated only to be admired.—It is of the highest actual service to the unfortunate, not only by enabling them to sustain the burden of their sufferings, but by opening a way to better prospects.—The timid and irresolute sink, at the approach of adversity, into a despondency the most unfriendly to their affairs, by precluding that courageous industry which might render them more tolerable; and therefore, by the nature of things,

augment the very evils of which they complain.

Cultivate in all circumstances this innate constancy—it will aid you in the attainment of every good and valuable end.—In prosperity, will secure you from the corruptions of vanity—impart dignity and serenity to adversity. In fine—you cannot, I think, but be steady in the practice of virtue, if you are firm in the expectation of its reward.

Rest assured that I am ever your friend,

CORNELIA.

LETTER XII.

MY epistles to you, my dear girls, are written without the least attention to method; their respective subjects have more the appearance of chance, than design; and therefore, may be justly called cursory thoughts on various subjects. Young folks, I know, do not love precise rules, and perhaps you deem the irregularity of my letters their chief merit. Allow them, however, one more—that of sincerity, and believe that the senti-

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ments they contain, flow from the heart; I believe, I need not add the word *spontaneously*.

As I disclaim all methodical arrangement of my subjects, I will here give you my thoughts on that very important part of female study, dress. Be not afraid that I am about to confine you to a primitive plainness, though probably, such a mode may be found more advantageous to beauty and elegance, than modern ones; yet I shall recommend that which is at once agreeable to fashion, and your own rank and circumstances. To reconcile these three conditions, is no easy task, yet herein lies a chief perfection

of the female character; few women possess the happy art;—yet those who do, must be allowed a very superior degree of merit. It is no inconsiderable trait in the character of an amiable young lady, that she knows how to support a genteel appearance; and yet pay a just regard to the frugality, which probably her limited circumstances require.

A fantastical and expensive turn in dress, is the certain mark of a little mind; but that attention to it, which principally regards neatness, is undoubtedly extremely laudable. Resolve to be always neat, or you can never be well-dressed;—a dirty ruffle,
a torn

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a torn apron, &c. are sufficient to disgrace the most splendid apparel.—Neatness is always within your power, and will always render you respectable in whatever rank of life you are placed ; but finery without it, is nothing more than a ridiculous glare, which is never seen but with disgust.

Fashion has imposed some general rules, which may innocently be followed under the restrictions I have mentioned.—Your clothes may be made according to the mode, though the materials which compose them, be less costly than if they belonged to a Duchess. An uncouth, ill-fashioned habit

habit, derogates even from the importance of a philosopher ;—and it is not till after a near acquaintance, that merit is discovered through a shabby garment—so much are mankind governed by appearances.

“ Prithee good Xenocrates (said Plato to his pupil) sacrifice to the graces.”—That great man knew how much the mental accomplishments might be illustrated and adorned by a polished exterior ;—a wise person, it is true, would not make this altogether the criterion of merit, yet perhaps, would not readily look for worth beneath an ungraceful exterior.

After

After all, my dear girls, esteem the frivolous, though often troublesome arts of dress, but as a tax you are in some sort obliged to pay to the folly of the age. Remember on all occasions, that external ornaments cannot make you better or happier women. Great minds, however they may have judged it necessary to conform to insignificant customs, have always regarded them in their proper light. The attention such are seen to shew to the idol fashion, is only a good natured condescension to the weakness of mankind, in points they judge of an indifferent nature, and much too trifling to become the objects of their serious

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ferious cares. The silly and ignorant are they who love dress for its own sake.

I am, &c.

CORNELIA.

LET.

LETTER XIV.

NEXT to our own principles, we are to regard those of our companions ; for they are almost of as much importance to us, as by long and intimate acquaintance they generally become our own—Virtuous habits are strengthened by example—so are vicious ones, but in a much higher degree ; nothing therefore can be a point of greater consequence than the choice of companions.

A great deal has been written on the subject, and every one who has the
care

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care of youth, fails not to inculcate the keeping good company ;—the only misfortune is, that the term has seldom been sufficiently explained, and the young mind is left to annex to it the ideas of birth and fortune, till by degrees the expression is supposed to imply both these qualifications.

The result has been the disturbance of all order in social life ;—each class of people quitting their own sphere to associate with those of superior rank ; and these again, inspired by the same sentiment, repel with scorn the ambitious attempt, solicitous only to attract the notice of still greater folks than themselves. Thus in the room of that social amity
with

- 6 with which the human heart should overflow, it is unhappily divided between the throbbings of ambition, and the pangs of offended pride.

It is evident, that in this bustle, greater attention is paid to the accidental circumstances of rank and affluence, than to real merit; we should not else so often see people of the middling rank, when flattered by the notice of a superior, so elated with the honour of keeping, what they call good company; when perhaps, that superior is conspicuous for almost every vice and meanness.—This is a grand mistake surely—as fatal to happiness as to morals.

Good

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Good company, can only mean persons of noble sentiments, refined manners, and enlightened understandings. But these qualities are not to be expected, where the scantiness of fortune has absolutely excluded the means of education; for the human mind becomes every thing by culture. It is therefore found, that in the lower ranks of society, where poverty has denied time and abilities for that happy employ, the worst habits, and most depraved morals prevail; for this reason you are not to chuse companions from such a class.

In fine, your associates must be those of a liberal and virtuous education.

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tion.—It may happen you may find a friend of this description, whose relative or necessary connections may not be eligible for you.—In this case she is by no means a proper companion, as her own merit, however great, will not compensate for the danger you incur in frequently mingling with persons of improper character.

A cultivated mind is the proper foil for every moral and social virtue—it is most likely to be found where Heaven has bestowed an easy fortune, consequently the genteeler ranks of life will be most likely to afford you proper companions.—But here let merit alone, and not adventitious circumstances,

cumstances, influence your selection—despise that contemptible weakness which piques itself on the rank, rather than the mental value of an acquaintance; and let never a principle of vanity lead you to the servile imitation of vice or folly, however sanctioned by wealth or titles.—Little minds are ever dazzled by shew and splendour—it is the property of the enlightened only to distinguish personal worth from external advantages. I should think you disgraced by an acquaintance with an Empress, if she was not as much distinguished by virtue as power.

Be careful not to form an acquaintance too hastily—many a virtuous girl
I
has

has sunk for ever in the esteem of the world, by being seen in company with those of doubtful reputation.—In vain she declares her ignorance of the real character of her companions.—She having admitted them to her society, without the requisite investigation of that point, infallibly renders her own prudence suspected.

A very extensive acquaintance is not necessary to social happiness.—A few select friends will most conduce to that end; and it is among these that

“ The free full converse of the friendly heart”

flows with uninterrupted and delight
—unfeigned cheerfulness and real enjoyment

ment exist much oftener in these little circles, than in large and ceremonious assemblies.—But should your station in life render a large acquaintance unavoidable, you will observe to all, a free unrestrained politeness, without admitting every one indiscriminately to your confidence.—Be ever frank and easy, without revealing your own secrets, or those of your friends, and make none your intimates but those of worth and honour.

Much, very much of human happiness depends on the proper choice of acquaintance—an ill-chosen friend has power to mar our felicity as much

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as an amiable and faithful one contributes to it.—The heart is formed for social intercourse; and when that intercourse is founded on the moral religious virtues, it gives a zest to the other enjoyments of life.

I am, my dear girls, &c.

CORNELIA,

LET.

LETTER XIV.

THERE are certain restrictions necessary to render the gift of speech what the great Creator designed it—a principal means of happiness to his rational creatures.—The first of these is an habitual care never to violate the laws of truth.—The pleasures resulting from mutual conversation vanish entirely, when no dependance can be placed in the speakers' veracity.—Those who speak merely from the suggestions of imagination,

tion, or, what is worse, malignity, are justly chargeable with half the strife that disturbs the peace of society. Such persons are the most dangerous companions, and need only to be known to be generally despised and avoided.—Indeed, so high a regard veracity obtains, among people of refinement, that you cannot offer a more gross affront than to accuse them of the violation of it.

Of all that has been said in admiration of Cato's character, nothing reflects so great a lustre on it as that striking, though tacit eulogium, bestowed on him in one of the Roman Courts

Courts of Judicature, where a cause being to be tried which required two witnesses, and one only appearing, the Judge declared he could not dispense with the law, even *though Cato himself were the witness.*

Besides, as Archbishop Tillotson finely observes, a constant adherence to truth has the least trouble and difficulty in it, it sits always upon the lips; whereas a lye is troublesome, and needs a great many more to make it good.

Next to the character of a liar, that of the detractor is the most odious—a

habit of traducing the reputation of others, by speaking all the ill we have heard of them, or putting the worst constructions on their actions, is totally opposite to the spirit of Christianity, which breathes nothing but candour and charity.—There is also something extremely mean in the practice, as the accused persons have seldom an opportunity of refuting the charge.—The cruel aspersions are borne on the wings of scandal from circle to circle, nor perhaps reaches the injured party till the wound given to reputation is too deep for cure.

Barbarous as such a custom is, I need not say how greatly it prevails in
almost

almost all companies. I have, however, the charity to believe it does not always proceed from malice or envy.—When no knowledge has been treasured up in the mind—no useful information acquired, conversation cannot receive aid from intellectual stores—what must then become of it?—must it flag and silence—dreadful silence reign?—No, something must re-kindle it; and when no rational subject arises, that something must be scandal.—This, though it may be a palliation of the crime, is yet no excuse; for the wounds given by unmeaning ignorance are as deep as those inflicted by premeditated rancour.—

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How shameful is it to reflect, that an impertinent eagerness for talking should thus wantonly explore the secret recesses of domestic life, and presume to judge of actions, the motives of which cannot be scanned by these ignorant prattlers.

The most effectual way to secure yourselves from the commission of this vice, will be the adorning your minds with such acquisitions of knowledge, and useful intelligence, as will enable you to furnish subjects for conversation, without descending to frivolity or destruction.—But should you not be so happy as to possess these
desirable

desirable resources, I hope you will have so much candour and good-nature as to be content with being accounted a dull and lifeless companion, rather than indulge an eagerness for talking at the expence of other people's good name.

Detraction is not only a violation of the rules of religion, but is also so impolitic a crime, as no one who wishes to be well received in the world would ever commit—for a person who is addicted to scandal, is a terror to society; the respect they receive, resembles the homage the Indians are said to pay to the Devil, rather to evade his malignity,

nity, than procure his love.—And however curiosity may, for a while, listen to an ill-natured anecdote, yet, be assured, the relator is regarded with a secret disgust by every benevolent person, who naturally expects to meet the same censorious fate, when opportunity serves.

Good policy will therefore correct a censorious disposition; yet, I trust, your restraint will be derived from a superior motive, namely, the obligations of religion, which forbid to speak evil of any, or to judge uncharitably of another.—The consciousness of having always obeyed these divine injunctions,

injunctions, will afford the best consolation, under the pain you may perhaps feel from the unjust aspersions of others—for such, probably, you will meet with in your journey of life, as no innocence can always be a defence from unmerited censure; and when this chances to be your case, you will derive unspeakable comfort, from the reflection of having treated the world more generously than it has treated you.

Whatever you say, should be meant for the entertainment or instruction of the company, rather than the gratification of vanity.—Many are so much

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actuated by self-love, that they never speak or act, but to be applauded.—Hence arises affectation—the most disgusting quality in nature.—Deliver your sentiments as they occur, without affecting more graces in your tone or gesture than are your own—these, well managed, will be enough to render you amiable.—All may be agreeable in their own natural sphere, but when they innovate on that of others, the attempt is commonly frustrated.

Above all, never affect that kind of wit which aims at severe retorts and repartee—it has generally ill-nature for its basis, and seldom makes a fally
but

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but it procures an enemy, if it does not lose a friend.—There is nothing in it to be admired but the readiness of thought, which gives it birth—but when the quality seems *aimed* at, rather than *possessed*, it is absolutely contemptible.

In fine—sincerity, candour, and good sense, must be the ornaments of your conversation. Politeness will give an agreeable lustre to these qualities, but remember, it can never be a substitute for them.

CORNELIA.

LETTER XV.

“HAIL politeness, Power divine!” says the sonnet, and surely no unnecessary invocation, for politeness, dear girls, is the friend of social happiness and domestic peace; if it was the fashion, in this age, to have household gods, I would surely give it a pre-eminent place amongst them.

I know not how it happens, but people seem to think, they are obliged
to

to be polite every where, but at home—
and there it is they are most required
to be so; for the refined satisfactions
of social intercourse, cannot long sub-
sist without it.—I am convinced, that
domestic quarrels and disgusts, would
much seldomer arise, if the par-
ties were always as polite as affectio-
nate.

But what is Politeness—is it the law
of Fashion, or a system of rules?—No—
it is the divine principle of benevo-
lence, branched into a thousand little
channels, and flowing through all the
minutiæ of human life.—Education
may improve, but can never give it,
for

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for it must be founded in the soul, or is never seen in full perfection.—A painter may learn the rules of design, and the compendium of colours; but if he possesses not the enthusiasm of the art, his pictures will be lifeless and insipid.

Politeness is that amiable disposition, which delights in the happiness of others—consults their ease—prevents their wants—and yields them every possible convenience. This is the source of those civilities and attentions, which distinguish a well bred person—without it, etiquette dwindles to unmeaning ceremony.

— You

You perceive then, that not only an attention to external graces, but a regulation of the disposition is necessary to constitute a polite person.—Acquire the amiable temper I have described, and you will infallibly please with that native ease which is thought so requisite to be attained, that the world has substituted in its room its wretched resemblance, effrontery;—but no more like the amiable original, than an ordinary statue to the Venus of Medicis.

I have often thought, that the best Christian is likely to be the most polite person.—This is an assertion you
have

have not been used to hear, yet may well enough be warranted by the tenour of the Gospel precepts, which inculcate the being tender of another's weakness—to prefer each other in honour—to give respect where due—with others to the like purpose.—Now if these excellent lessons contain (as I think will be allowed) the substance of what, at this day, is termed good breeding, St. Paul must be a better teacher than my Lord Chesterfield himself—since he breathes the enlivening spirit, without which the ceremonial code is a lifeless system, calculated perhaps to disguise the heart, but not to
add

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add one iota to the real happiness of
social life.—

Without ceremony, believe me your
friend,

CORNELIA.

LET-

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LETTER XVI.

NOTHING is more talked of than Religion—nothing less understood—without comprehending what it really is ; the spirit of bigotry would arrogate the whole, nor allow of its being without the contracted pale of a particular sect.

I have juster notions of religion—see it as it is—not a mode of ceremonies, but a divine principle influencing
the

RUDIMENTS OF TASTE. 141

the whole moral conduct; its simple, fixed and determinate sense, is briefly love of God, and good will to mankind. This, dear girls, is the sum of all religion; without it, vain were the oblations of the Jewish church—vain are the ceremonials of the Christian.

The “love of God,” is an expression, that of late years has been as grossly abused, as the word religion.—Strange as it may appear, there have been those, who leading the most immoral lives, have styled themselves lovers of the God of purity—whose tongues could utter a pious ejaculation, while their hands were committing the
most

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most flagitious crimes. But be not deceived—this exalted character belongs neither to bigotry or enthusiasm. The love of God is not a passion, but a rational principle; it is those sentiments of reverence and gratitude, which naturally arise in a generous mind when reflecting on one supreme beneficent power, who is the immediate author of all good, and the fountain of all perfection.—This conviction is the parent of unaffected piety; the soul cannot but adore the Being she believes to be all wise, all mighty, and eternal;—she cannot but love him who is the source of un-numbered blessings;—nor chuse, but dread to offend

offend him whose nature she believes to be Holiness. Hence the source of moral virtue—sin is avoided, because displeasing to the will of the Deity; and virtuous dispositions acquired, because agreeable to a power who is able to reward every endeavour to please him, with eternal and unspeakable happiness.

Such a filial rational love, must be the fruit of every mind that is not ignorant of the being and attributes of God;—or that has not received from bigotry or superstition, any mistaken notions of him. To prevent being disturbed by the spiritual pride of hypocritical

critical fanatics, remember there is an invariable test by which you may know if you have the love of God. Ask your own heart, if it seeks the favour of the Deity above every other consideration?—if it values this more than its dearest interests, and even life itself, a ready affirmative puts the question out of all doubt.

I have been always of opinion, that religion owes the abuses that have been put on her, more to the weakness than the knavery of mankind—perhaps it would be no hard task to prove, that all the absurd doctrines which at this day disgrace her in certain

tain sects—originated with persons, the warmth of whose imagination, exceeded the strength of their understanding ;—but waving whatever tends to controversy, I shall only hint that the practice of piety has received considerable injury by devotees of the above-mentioned class.—Forgetful of what was just now advanced, that religion is not a passion, but a principle ; these people have made it all consist in incoherent rhapsodies, and senseless jargon of devout impulses—holy consolations, and such like, which I believe they are more indebted for to particular tempers and constitution, than any revelation of divine favour.—Persons of

H

solid

solid sense, have with reason been disgusted at this affected piety—but the world loves to run into extremes, and therefore it happens, that because the cant of hypocrisy or superstition, has been judged injurious to the dignity of religion—modern manners disclaim any acquaintance with her at all.

But be assured, my dear girls, that nothing so highly elevates and adorns the human character, as a steady rational piety—nor any thing capable of yielding so pure and exalted a happiness to the soul, as an habit of devotion.—No one who has experienced the vicissitude of sublunary things, but must

must highly value the privilege of possessing a friend, that would at all times be acceptable—ready to hear the complaints of affliction, and all powerful to relieve them.

Such a friend you may enjoy in the Divine Being; of what consequence is it then that you acquire a taste for the exercises of devotion?—that you cultivate a friendship with Heaven, and accustom your hearts to talk with God? This is an emphatical expression of David, and gives you an idea of rational and sincere prayer—which consists not in formal addresses, but is the genuine language of the heart.—Such a divine intimacy, has something

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in it extremely suitable to the noblest sensations of the soul; and therefore may well be sought after as a source of refined and exquisite felicity. —In trouble, you will find it more precious than the balm of Gilead—it will shed a ray of sacred peace, when the dark clouds of adversity obscure your path—in death.—But here my pen must stop—there can be no doubt but at that final, that awful period, the divine attachment breaks forth into a seraphic flame.

I am, more than I can say,

Your friend,

CORNELIA.

29

LETTER XVII.

THE generality of people style themselves christians, without understanding the value or the necessity of christianity; and perhaps, neither the one, nor the other, can be seen in a proper light, without taking a comparative view of the human soul before and after the fall.

It is not for my humble pen to illustrate the excellency of a system which has God himself for its author—

nor is it my design to attempt a task so far above my abilities; yet that you may not wholly take your religion upon trust, I would call your attention to what man was when first created.—

But a little inferior to Angels—his reason was clear, his soul all purity, and his mind all intelligence—fit companion for natures wholly spiritual, and enjoying the most familiar intercourse with them. That grand question which has since agitated the schools of philosophy, of what was the chief good of man, was all apparent to the first of the human race;—he saw perfectly clear, that it consisted
in

in the intire assimilation of his will to that of the Deity—and in the pursuit found a full unmixed felicity.—But he was created with the power of doing otherwise, or where would have been the merit of obedience.—The duty of free agency, must be far preferable to that which arises from blind necessity.

Adam continued a happy being as long as his will remained consonant to that of his Maker ;—but at the instant it deviated therefrom, he fell from happiness and perfection. The conciseness of the scripture history, leaves unthinking minds in doubt as to the

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nature of Adam's transgression, but undoubtedly it originated in the mere desire of doing contrary to the divine command;—he forgot that the Deity was his happiness, and he sought it in his own will. It was herein he sinned, and not simply by eating the forbidden fruit, for at the very moment Adam became capable of imagining there might be a good abstract from the favour of God—that moment he fell.

The Creator saw at one comprehensive view, the miseries which would accrue to mankind, from the voluntary perversion of the intellectual and moral powers;—then was the scheme
of

of Christianity devised, as an effectual means of restoring human nature to the happiness and perfection it originally possessed.—The purposed blessing was graciously announced in that prediction, that the posterity of Eve should crush the serpent's head.

The human reason thus clouded, it is almost surprising to reflect by what rapid steps the world became immersed in the worst of ignorance and vice.—Those who still retained some idea of the Sovereign Creator, had recourse to a visible symbol of his Majesty; for their intellectual faculties were too gross to apprehend an im-

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material Deity—it soon happened that the symbol itself was made the immediate of divine worship; and hence, doubtless, the origin of idolatry, which in the time of Abraham had so generally spread over the earth, that it appeared necessary to the Supreme Governor of the universe to call that good man from his country and his kindred to ordain him the father of a nation; who being, by numerous and peculiar laws, separated from the rest of the world, might preserve, uncorrupt, the knowledge of the Divine Nature. The Bible will convince you how ineffectual, not only these laws, but the frequent and signal manifestations

tions of Almighty power were to secure that people from the grossest idolatry, the rites of which were now become so terrible to the imagination, that they even burnt their children alive, in sacrifices to their horrid idols.

What a picture is here of human nature! that nature which once so nearly approached the angelic.—Do you not begin to see the necessity of a Redeemer?—Let us pursue the thread of history, and take a superficial view of the most celebrated nations which peopled the earth before the glorious æra of his appearance.

The Egyptians were very early esteemed for learning laws and arts—they were a numerous, powerful, and wealthy people, but so grossly idolatrous, that they not only worshipped images, but beasts, insects, and even vegetables. The manufactures and extensive commerce of Phænecia, supposes some advance in refinement—but national intercourse in those wretched times served but to promulgate national idolatries.—Babylon, that mighty seat of empire, surpassed most other nations in the superb materials of her Gods.—Astronomers there observed the motions of the Heavens, and bowed in adoration to the

the splendid hosts that adorned them.

—Cyrus, who erected the Persian on the ruins of the Babylonish Monarchy, knew nothing of the Almighty Being, who named him, an age before he had existence, as the instrument of Liberty to his captive people. Alexander, who in his turn subverted this extensive empire, could only blend his Grecian idols with the Persian—for dark, deplorably dark, was every corner of the habitable earth, except the inconsiderable land of Judea, where only a few despised, enfeebled tribes, possessed the light of sacred knowledge.

What

What a spectacle for the Father of the Universe ! who produced a world to know him and be happy !—How much must his divine compassion be excited, on contemplating his glorious work in ruins—to redeem it was an effort worthy of himself.

We now come to the enlightened ages of Greece and Rome—a period when I fancy I see the human soul like a brilliant gem, illustrious in the dust.—What noble struggles did then the human reason make to free itself from the incumbent load of darkness and error.—Then lived those numerous worthies, whose names are yet
precious

precious to posterity.—What greatness of soul—what a taste for solid glory—what elevated sentiments did they not discover?—Yet these men, so far superior to the rest of their species, acknowledged a multiplicity of Deities, whose moral characters were infinitely inferior to their own, and to whom they scrupled not to ascribe actions which themselves would have blushed to acknowledge.—Every passion of the human mind was personified, and deified; statues graced every corner of their streets.—Yet were there not wanting some among them who made bold advances in search of better information—like
benighted

benighted travellers they followed the most distant gleam of light, yet all they could obtain was doubt and obscurity.

At this period, when reason had done all it could do to regain its native rights and privileges—the Saviour of the world appeared, at whose sacred presence idolatry fled, and the knowledge of the one true God began to enlighten mankind.—They no longer were compelled to enquire “Where is God our Maker?”—They knew him, and were instructed in his divine worship.—The doctrines which the divine Messiah taught, eminently tended

tended to restore human nature to the rectitude and happiness it had lost—they were calculated to harmonize the passions—regulate the affections, and exalt the soul to a sense of her own dignity, by revealing, in the clearest terms, the immortality of her nature—a point which philosophy had long sought to explore through the dim veil of probable conjecture.

A cursory view of the tenets of Christianity is sufficient to evince, that they were designed to establish the happiness of mankind even in the present life.—Consider the benevolence and charity they inculcate—the patience,

ence, meekness, moderation, contempt of worldly pleasures and enjoyments, the generous clemency to enemies; with the rest of that bright assemblage of virtues they enjoin, and you will confess it a matter of wonder that the felicity of Eden is not already restored to those countries where the religion of Christ is professed—and the reason it is not so can be none other, than that of the thousands who daily make profession of it, so few have a competent knowledge of its nature and design.—Born in a Christian land, they think such a scrutiny superfluous.—Thus they call themselves Christians, without having any thing of the spirit

spirit of Christ.—And thus the human race is still obnoxious to a thousand miseries, for want of applying to themselves the remedy which alone could put an end to moral evil.

May you, my dear girls, be effectually convinced of the inestimable value of this divine dispensation, and think with Dr. Young, that

“ A Christian is the highest style of man.”

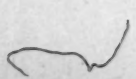
There are no virtuous dispositions—no generous affections—no truly noble sentiments, that are not comprized in that sublime character. Possess it,
my

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my young friends, for no higher
distinction, or greater felicity, can
possibly be wished you by

CORNELIA.

F I N I S.



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